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SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO: DISASTER DECLARATION: MEASLES OUTBREAK

11. This is an action request. Please see paragraph 10.

12. Summary: The largest measles outbreak in Burkina Faso in over a decade is entering its 20th week and the total number of cases continues to increase with 3,812 new cases reported for the most recent reporting week. The 34,451 total cases reported to date have already exceeded the 1996 outbreak which recorded 32,415 cases. The largest concentrations of measles cases are in the one to four year old group (24 percent) and in the 15 to 24 year old group (23 percent). High levels of acute malnutrition and other chronic illnesses including the possibility of an H1N1 influenza outbreak increase the risks associated with measles. With no end to the epidemic in sight, the Government of Burkina Faso lacks the capacity to purchase vaccines required to implement a large scale measles vaccination campaign as outlined in recently revised WHO protocols. The Charge d'Affaires therefore declares that a disaster exists in Burkina Faso and requests USD 250,000 for the procurement of urgently needed vaccines. Funds would be provided to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to procure vaccines and vaccination supplies. End Summary.

Scope of the Measles Epidemic

13. The Ministry of Health (MOH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) began formally tracking the current measles outbreak on 29 December, 2008. Since that time, the total number of reported cases has continued to increase with 3,812 new cases reported for the most recent reporting week (week 18) making this the most serious measles outbreak in over a decade. Since the beginning of the outbreak, a total of 35,451 cases have been recorded with 250 deaths for a case fatality rate of 0.0071 percent. The number of cases in this outbreak has already exceeded the 32,415 cases recorded in the 1996 epidemic.

14. This year's measles outbreak has impacted all age groups, particularly children between one to four years old (24 percent of

cases) and young adults from 15 to 24 years old (23 percent of cases). According to statistics provided by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and UNICEF, between 85 and 90 percent of all reported cases occurred in unvaccinated individuals. Seventeen percent of children 0-11 months of age who contracted the disease had been previously vaccinated, as had 20 percent of 1-4 year and 28 percent of 5-9 year olds.

----- Aggravating Factors -----

¶5. According to experts, complications from the measles are most likely to occur in children under age five and adults over 20 years of age. In addition, children with poor diets or weakened immune systems are at greater risk of developing complications. Measles can also weaken victims' immune systems for up to six months. Current Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates in BF are at critical levels (11.4 percent rural, 12.4 percent urban). Thus, children who are already experiencing critically high rates of acute malnutrition, malaria, intestinal parasites, and diarrhea face increased risks from these and other life threatening conditions (including the possibility of an H1N1 influenza outbreak).

----- Current Response and Plan for Future Action -----

¶6. To date, the response to this year's epidemic has been through traditional case management procedures administered primarily by the MOH with limited treatment provided by number of NGOs. This response has helped contro the mortality rate and limited the development f certain complications; however, it has not slowe the spread of measles.

¶7. In order to stop th spread of the disease, a plan for a large scale vaccination campaign targeting the most affected areas has already been developed and adopted by the MOH, WHO, and UNICEF. This vaccination plan implements a newly adopted WHO protocol that uses mass vaccinations to control a measles outbreak. However, the GOBF lacks the financial resources to purchase vaccines and other supplies required to carry out the campaign; and has called on the international community for assistance.

¶8. Under the plan, a vaccination campaign covering all people age six months to 24 years old will be undertaken in the nineteen health districts with the longest lasting and highest measles and mortality rates. Eighteen other health districts will be targeted for selective vaccinations given to children from 6 to 59 months who have not previously been vaccinated when they arrive at health or vaccination centers. The vaccination campaign will be carried out by the MOH, which according to WHO and UNICEF, has a proven record of conducting large scale vaccination campaigns including inoculating seven million people against Yellow Fever. Under the plan, all measles vaccinations arescheduled to be administered during a five day period.

¶9. According to UNICEF, in addition to the vaccination campaign, an investigation of the current outbreak is planned and is tentatively scheduled to be conducted by a joint UNICEF/CDC/WHO team from 10 May to 20 May.

----- Action Required -----

¶10. Based on a recent assessment of the ongoing measles epidemic and in response to a request by the GOBF for assistance, the Charge d'Affaires has determined that the outbreak in Burkina Faso is of sufficient magnitude to warrant U.S. Government assistance. The Charge d'Affaires therefore declares that a disaster exists in Burkina Faso and requests USD 250,000 for the procurement of urgently needed vaccines. Funds can be provided to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the procurement of vaccines and vaccination supplies.

¶11. UNICEF will work in close collaboration with WHO and the MOH to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young adults in the most affected districts are vaccinated. Together with USAID/OFDA

staff, the Embassy in Burkina Faso will continue to monitor the current situation and report accordingly.

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